

House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Steroid Use Hearing
Member Panel Testimony
Congressman Jim Ryun (KS-02)
March 10, 2005

Mr. Chairman:

It is an honor to be here, and I would like to thank you for asking me to participate in this most important and timely hearing.

As a three-time Olympian and former professional athlete, I take this issue before us today both personally and seriously. During my career I ran over 100 miles a week, training twice a day. I believed then, as I do today, that there is no acceptable substitute for hard work when it comes to sports, or for that matter, anything in life.

I was fortunate to run at a time before performance enhancing steroids became a real issue in the professional sports arena. In fact, during my athletic career, I did not know of any long distance runner that used steroids. Sadly, the running world has now been hit with steroids, blood doping through the use of E.P.O., and other forms of performance enhancing drugs.

While most athletes refuse to use performance enhancing drugs, steroid use has become a serious problem in professional athletics today.

I find this new trend to be very disturbing.

Like it or not, professional athletes are natural role models for our young people, and it is time that they begin to take this responsibility seriously. Today's athletes are sending the wrong message to their young fans, a dangerous message that stands not only to have a negative impact on their future athletic lives, but also on the rest of their lives as a whole.

It is encouraging to see that many professional athletes who have admitted their steroid use are now working to educate others on the dangers associated with them.

Using performance enhancing steroids is a way of trying to get something for nothing. For many, it is the easy road to more fame or more money. Steroid use is a method to bypass the blood, sweat, and tears of training and is really nothing less than cheating to achieve unnatural results.

Today, I am speaking as a representative of those who did it the right way. I trained exceptionally hard to reach the level of performance that I achieved. I spent an average of 4 to 5 hours each day working to improve upon the God given talent that I had been blessed with. I ran thousands of miles in brutal conditions and was proud to compete with so many athletes who were doing the same.

When others cheat, it robs those who compete fairly of reaping the benefits of their hard work.

In addition to the negative influence steroid use is having on the mindset of our society, it also does not come without significant physical risks. Athletes are trading a few years of marginal performance enhancement for a potential lifetime of negative health effects.

In fact, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse: the major side effects from abusing anabolic steroids can include liver tumors and cancer, jaundice, fluid retention, high blood pressure, increases in LDL (bad cholesterol), and decreases in HDL (good cholesterol). Other side effects include kidney tumors, severe acne, trembling, and not to mention several other gender and age specific problems.

In addition, people who inject anabolic steroids run the added risk of contracting or transmitting HIV/AIDS or hepatitis, which causes serious damage to the liver.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that if unaddressed, this problem will only escalate into greater problems for athletes and millions of others influenced by them. It is time that we start sending a positive message to our young people while at the same time protecting the health and integrity of our athletes and the sports they compete in.

Thank You.